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ABSTRACT

This report evaluates the effectiveness of an experiential field study course at the University of Washington. The course, titled GST 250/350, has different goals from a traditional volunteer program in that the student's education and experience are paramount; the services he provides are secondary. The student's motivation also differs somewhat from that of a volunteer because his purpose is that of gaining more knowledge of disciplines such as sociology, education, psychology, law, more about himself (capabilities, weaknesses, career interests), and more about the relationship of classroom learning to its application in society. Through the use of student papers, agency ratings and student questionnaires, it was concluded that the 112 enrollees had attained their educational objectives and that the course must be judged a legitimate part of the University undergraduate curriculum. (HS)

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Patricia W. Lunneborg and Sandra K. Mitchell

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Evaluation of GSt 250/350, Project-Oriented Field Study

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the effectiveness of the undergraduate field study course, GSt 250/350 funded by the Division of General and Interdisciplinary Studies during autumn quarter 1971.

Administration

The course is overseen by a supervisory committee consisting of three faculty members appointed by the Dean, one serving as chairman, the teaching assistant, and three undergraduates from the Community Services Commission (CSC). This committee is to meet three times during the quarter to set general policies and procedures. The TA's duties are summarized in Appendix 1 which provides a guide for all future quarters. In addition to these duties, the TA spends the bulk of her 20 hours per week advising students individually and providing liaison among the supervisory committee, the General Studies Office, Community Services Commission, faculty sponsors, and participating agencies. The TA is responsible for collecting and evaluating student papers, agency ratings of students, and other data related to the educational objectives of the course. The General Studies Office provides clerical assistance and the CSC has overseen two primary field activities, S.T.A.Y. and Social Tutoring. In addition, Project Accomplish has played a vital role in advising students and locating new agencies willing to supervise students. Faculty sponsors have made it possible for students to do fieldwork in other than "approved" agencies for which the TA has carried the primary instructional responsibility.

The faculty members on the supervisory committee have been available to resolve any instructional difficulties the TA may have and each is currently

working on projects related to improving the quality of GSt 250/350, i.e., Ronald Akers, Sociology, is working with CSC members to write better guidelines for student reports; Jerry Kelley, Continuing Education and Social Work, has been consulting with CSC members to improve proposals for expanding field studies; Patricia Lunneborg, Psychology, has seen evaluation of the course as her primary contribution.

Agencies are required to evaluate students placed with them at the end of every quarter and to report on their supervision and training function. See Appendix 2. Agencies are continuously evaluated by the TA who maintains an "approved" list according the criteria of adequate supervision and quality of student activity. These agencies represent natural extensions of University fields of study and do not violate University policy towards religious teaching and partisan politics.

Goals

GSt 250/350 as a University course has different goals than a traditional volunteer program. The student is the focus of the experience rather than clients or agency needs. His education is paramount; the services he provides are secondary. His motivation differs somewhat from a volunteer. The student wants primarily to learn--more knowledge of disciplines such as sociology, education, psychology, law, more about himself (capabilities, weaknesses, career interests), and more about the relationship of classroom learning to its application in society. Also in contrast to volunteering, the student can expect to be properly trained and supervised by individuals who accept teaching as proper agency function. Students must also set specific educational goals and communicate formally to the University their progress towards

these goals. Naturally students, like volunteers, derive satisfaction from serving others and expressing altruism through field study, but their primary satisfaction is in enhanced learning through this nonacademic mode.

In its "Guide for Participating Agencies" GSt 250/350 is described as follows:

> Project-Oriented Study offers the student academic credit for learning done outside University classrooms and laboratories. Most often the student does volunteer service at a reputable community agency where his work is guided by an established professional person with the cooperation of a university faculty committee. Less often, a student will originate his own project and work on it with a faculty advisor from the university with interests in the specific area of the project.
>
> For students with fairly definite career plans, Project-Oriented Study provides pre-vocational fieldwork not available elsewhere. But many other students choose Project-Oriented Study as a real-life laboratory to apply, evaluate, challenge, and integrate the products of their academic training. Students have clear--but not necessarily narrow--ideas of educational goals for their projects. Their projects are not to duplicate other university courses or programs.

Requirements

The course requirements are:

1. A minimum of 3 hours work per week per credit unit on the project, a total of 30 hours per credit during the quarter. This time includes a reasonable amount of preparation and transportation. Students may earn up to 5 credits per quarter and a maximum of 15 credits total.

2. A term paper of length and quality appropriate to the number of credits earned. This paper need not be "scholarly," but it must represent the student's concept of what he has learned from the project.

3. In addition, each student is rated by his supervisor at the end of the quarter. Participants are graded on a Pass/Fail basis according to their record of time spent, the term paper, and the agency evaluation.

Results

Enrollment autumn quarter 1971 was 115 of whom 112 received credit (an S, pass), and 3 received incompletes (two for illness, one for lack of agency evaluation). It was the policy of the TA to require students to withdraw from the course if they were not meeting requirements by the quarter's end--thus, no I's were given for this reason. Of the original 148 students who signed up, 33 were made to take passing withdrawals.

The papers in the TA's judgment were generally well-done and imaginative but varied greatly in the obvious amount of time and thought invested in each. They correlated, as expected, with number of hours of credit, the 5-hour students turning in the best papers. One-third referenced readings done in conjunction with their field projects. When papers were of marginal quality, the TA used the agency evaluation to decide whether to pass or fail the student. Obviously, even the poor scholars in the group met their service obligations.

Every quarter of the current academic year a different evaluative instrument is being used to assess the effectiveness of GSt 250/350. Winter quarter a student rating of agencies is planned and in spring a study of changes in values. Autumn quarter 87 of the 112 students completed an anonymous questionnaire about their experiences. The remainder of the report summarizes student responses.

Personal information. Typical of experiential learning courses elsewhere, 60 percent of enrollees were women, 40% men. Fifty-two percent were between 17-21 in age, 29% between 22 and 25, with 19% older. Seniors constituted 44% of the sample, 22% juniors, 26% sophomores, 6% freshmen, and 2% "other." Estimated present cumulative GPA's suggest an "average" group of students and were as follows:

GPA's	%
2.0 - 2.5	17
2.6 - 3.0	35
3.1 - 3.5	34
Over 3.5	14

Only 62% of these students were A&S majors, the bulk in social sciences (38% of total). Remarkably, 38% came from outside the traditional A&S curriculum. These students were enrolled for the following amounts of credit: 1-10 credits, 6%; 11-15 credits, 42%; 16-18 credits, 30%; 18 and above credits, 22%. As may be seen, over half of these students were taking above average loads, more or less adding on field study rather than replacing academic fare. Fieldwork credits were distributed as follows:

Credit	%
1	17
2	19
3	31
4	8
5	25

Students earning 1 or 2 credits tended to be STAY and Social Tutoring participants whose hours were limited by the availability of children to be tutored. Students earning 5 credits tended to be faculty-sponsored and in projects directly related to career plans.

Individual project information. Students described their training in the following way:

Percent students reporting	Type of training	Percent students reporting 1-3 hrs	4-6 hrs	Over 6 hrs
34	Pre-service (orientation)	13	3	18
59	In-service (on-the-job)	19	1	39
43	Continuing (workshops, seminars, lectures)	13	4	26
43	Reading (manuals, books)	21	2	20
21	Other	2	0	19

No student reported no training and the average number of training experiences provided by agencies was two. Students primarily worked directly with clients (83%) and 10% were paid for their work in addition to receiving credit. With these clients they performed the following services: education or tutoring (58%), counseling or therapy (28%), social service (22%), research (17%), child care and medical services (6% each), and legal aid (5%). Twenty-three percent performed "other" services which included interviewing, testing, recreation supervision, administrative work.

Students evaluated their agency training in relation to their field study projects in the following way: 85% rated their training from "very helpful" to "moderately helpful" with only 13% saying "slightly helpful" and 2% "no help at all." They rated this experience in terms of their over-all college education: 82% from "very" to 'moderately" helpful, 15% 'slightly helpful" and 3% "no help at all." The modal response to both of these items was the extreme of "very helpful." Over half of the group reported amount of supervision ranging from zero to 25% of the time; 19% of students were supervised from a quarter to a half of their time at the agency; 26% of students were heavily supervised, their activities overseen from 50 to 100% of the time. Students evaluated this supervision as "very helpful," 39%; "fairly helpful," 26%; "moderately helpful," 16%; "slightly helpful," 11%; and "no help," 8 %. Eighty-one percent said their supervision contributed to their over-all college education from "very" to "moderately" helpful, while 19% checked it as only "slightly" or 'no help." Again, as above, over three-quarters of these students judge they were realizing their educational objectives through field study.

Twenty-nine percent of the group had faculty sponsors (in addition often to agency supervisors) with whom they consulted once, 37%; 2-3 times, 42%, 4

or more times, 21%. The twenty-five individuals with faculty sponsors rated the benefit of this consultation in the same pattern as above with more dissatisfaction than with agency personnel - 32% said faculty were "slightly" to "no help" on their particular project, and 24% said faculty were of little help in terms of their over-all college education. This finding is noteworthy and is the basis of a recommendation at the end of the report.

General course information. More students found out about GSt 250/350 through other students than any other way (28%) unless the percentages referred by the three CSC agencies are summed, STAY (19%), Social Tutoring (9%), Project Accomplish (19%). Nine percent found the course via their academic advisors and 16% learned of it in the Daily or time schedule. Students responded to "Would you be working on your project if you were not enrolled in GSt 250/350?" with 60% yes, 8% no, and 32% yes, but spending less time on the project. Three-quarters of them were continuing their projects the following quarter, 42% of the total group for credit, 32% for no credit. Forty percent said they were taking academic courses that quarter related to the project which group, as above, primarily rated the courses as helpful with only 21% saying they were of little help.

There was little discrepancy between how much time students had expected to spend on the projects and how much time was actually spent, percents of students as follows:

Hours	Expected	Actual
0 - 30	10	6
31 - 60	24	27
61 - 90	25	24
91 -120	12	18
121 -150	7	4
151 plus	22	21

In agreement with agency comments students put in more time than they were required in many cases.

Student motivation. Why were students doing field study? The percentages of the group checking the following indicate that career knowledge and personal satisfaction combined seem the typical motivational force.

Percent responding	Why doing field study
72	To get experience in the area of my intended occupation
72	For personal satisfaction
61	To make my education more relevant
38	To round out my general education
33	To apply my learning from regular courses
28	To learn more about a specific topic
24	To help me decide on an occupation
22	Miscellaneous other reasons

Students (52%) said continue GSt 250/350 as it is now. The principal recommendations made by students in order of priority were "count towards distribution requirements" (presumably as social science credit), "require fewer hours of work per credit," "move to specific departments," "require of all UW students." No one checked "be discontinued." One hundred percent "would advise fellow students to take project-oriented field study."

Five educational-objectives statements were rated by this group of students as follows: Strongest agreement for "Students should help decide what is taught at the university" and for "In general, practical experience is more important than formal education;" agreement that "Universities should be centers for academic learning and scholarly research;" disagreement that "The University of Washington should have no specific course requirements for graduation," and strong disagreement with "It is well known how students learn best, and there is little reason to try new methods of education."

Discussion

The inception of GSt 250/350 in 1971 was a welcome move to many UW students and faculty members who had watched field study develop at major colleges and universities across the country. In 1955 Harvard's Department of Social Relations led the way, concentrating student energies principally in the field of mental health. Since that time countless schools have created for-credit courses in which students do field study in a wide range of settings--mental hospitals, educational settings including special education, counseling and preventive mental health agencies, recreational services, social work agencies, personnel offices, physical health facilities, social science research agencies, law-connected agencies, child care facilities--to name a few. An example of a well-developed summer program in which the University does not participate is the WICHE project (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education). UW students who wish to work-and-study have had to travel to Pullman or Corvallis to colleges which have accepted instruction in this applied mode. An example of the pressure from a discipline to offer such study comes from the American Psychological Association's "Project on Undergraduate Education in Psychology" by James A. Kulik (University of Michigan, 1971) in which the major recommendation for psychology departments for improving undergraduate curriculum is through increasing opportunities for active student participation in laboratories and in field experience.

What has been done autumn 1971 in GSt 250-350 is a structuring of the course to make administration smooth, to maintain a high level of supervision and training by agencies, to provide (through the TA) adequate

instructional backing, and to establish a means for judging how and in what directions to have such project-oriented study develop at the University. It is clear that one TA can handle 115 students. It is the judgment of the supervisory committee, however, that many more students over that number means the TA will need the assistance of other TA's or undergraduate readers, primarily for paper reading and grading and for agency visitation.

What the students reported anonymously in last quarter's questionnaire is what the agencies also report--project-oriented field study is unanimously acclaimed. Reading student papers leaves little doubt in the writers' minds that over 80% of students find such study an exhilerating educational experience. Perhaps it is because this learning is inherently enjoyable that they report they "learn so much more than ever before." GSt 250/350 has become a hard-nosed course in the sense that it spells out minimal basic requirements for learning and says if you don't do these things we don't want you wasting agency time, instructor's time, or your time. It is obvious this year that these requirements are judged by some students as "too high," in which case if they worked in the field, it was on a voluntary basis.

The primary recommendation derived from the questionnaire has to do with disillusionment over faculty involvement with special projects. The reason why faculty are reluctant to take on GSt 250/350 students is that they get no teaching credit for this activity. Without this usual incentive for teaching, it is understandable that students will continue to have difficulty finding individuals who prefer to teach 'for nothing" when if they do it in their own departments, it counts towards meeting required teaching loads. Additionally, individual instruction is the most costly kind. The quality

of the program would be greatly enhanced by a University policy of granting release teaching time for faculty members who supervise project-oriented students.

It would also be desirable to expand the variety of applied settings to include the natural sciences. Certainly there must be governmental agencies (at least) which solve problems having to do with chemistry, physics, and biology. GSt 250/350 heavy emphasis on the social sciences is historically understandable but leaves out many other areas of interest where students would like to get practical experience as well. Environmental problems encompass the natural sciences and seem a "natural" area in which to extend field-oriented, supervised study.

Appendix 1

Responsibilities of the Teaching Assistant, Project-Oriented Field Studies

Compiled by Sandra Mitchell, Fall, 1971

WEEK 1: Advisory Committee Meeting (arrange another one for 5th week)
Many student appointments.

WEEK 2: Have card file typed up.
Send letter to faculty sponsors re: responsibilities.

WEEK 3: Compare official class list with card file.
Send letters to those without applications; separate those from the card file which are not on the class list.
Send letters to students for whom you need extra information of any kind.

WEEK 4: Send letter and questionnaire to all prospective new agencies.
Check to see that you have the addresses of every place students are presently working.

WEEK 5: Prepare following quarter's application and information sheet (be sure to have it ready by pre-registration).
Advisory Committee meeting (arrange another for 9th week).

WEEK 6: Revise agency list and have duplicated.

WEEK 7: Pre-registration, many appointments.
Visit prospective agencies.

WEEK 8: Send out evaluation forms to agencies, enclosing stamped, self-addressed envelopes.
Send grade sheets to faculty sponsors.

WEEK 9: Term papers due.

WEEK 10: Letter to those who did not turn in term papers.

EXAM WEEK: Grade students.
Turn in grade cards.

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GENERAL STUDIES FIELD WORK, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98105

To: _____ Date: _____

We would like to request of you a rating of the performance of the following student who has been receiving practicum experience through G. St. 250/350 with your agency: _____ for _____ credits or _____ hours per week (approximately _____ total hours) over _____ quarter. The student's grade depends partly upon this rating of his participation in your organization. Please describe the student's activities: _____

_____

Please evaluate the following:	Superior	Above Avg	Average	Below Avg	Not enough information
Attendance					
Cooperation					
Dependability					
Empathy with clients					
Flexibility					
Independence					
Ingenuity					
Judgment					
Knowledge of skills gained					
Motivation for service career					
Personal involvement with agency					
OVERALL COMPETENCE					

Person responsible for rating: _____
(Name) (Title) (Date)

Do you have any comments, criticisms, or suggestions regarding G.St. 250/350 and placement with your agency?

Please mail in the enclosed, stamped envelope by _____. Thank you again for your participation.

Sandra K. Mitchell
C-18 Padelford
543-4853